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TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

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NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 2302 ACTION SECSTATE 15 MAR

QUOTE

S E C R E T BEIRUT 2302

NODIS

DEPART REPEAT DAMASCUS AND OTHER POSTS AS DESIRED.

FROM LAMBRAKIS

E.O. 11652 XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, PINE, SY, LE

SUBJ: SYRIAN PERCEPTION OF LEBANESE DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (A) DAMASCUS 1445. (B) DAMASCUS 1446. (C) STATE 62097

SUMMARY: SYRIANS MADE ONE TACTICAL ERROR IN APPLYING
THEIR ORIGINAL GAME PLAN. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THEY
UNDERSTAND WHERE THEY WENT WRONG SO THAT THEY DO NOT
REPEAT SAME ERROR. END SUMMARY.

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1. FROM VIEWPOINT OF THIS EMBASSY AT LEAST, SYRIANS MADE ONE MAJOR MISTAKE IN NOT PUTTING DOWN LT. KHATIB'S RENEGADE "LEBANESE ARAB ARMY" WHEN IT WAS A SMALL FORCE IN THE BEKAA WITHOUT ANY SIZEABLE POLITICAL FOLLOWING. WHILE SYRIANS SAID THEY WOULD TAKE CARE OF IT, THEY DID NOT. OTHERS, TRUSTING SYRIANS' ABILITY TO DO THIS, ALSO UNDERESTIMATED KHATIB'S POTENTIAL. WHEN KHATIB WAS ALLOWED TO MOVE BACK TO THE SOUTH EARLY THIS WEEK, LEBANESE AND PALESTINIAN LEFT WING HERE UNDER LEADERSHIP OF JUMBLATT AND VARIETY OF REJECTIONIST ELEMENTS SEIZED OPPORTUNITY TO USE KHATIB AS RALLYING POINT FOR THEIR OWN PROGRAM WHICH SYRIANS MUST UNDERSTAND DIFFERS FROM SYRIAN PROGRAM AS WE VIEW IT.

2. ESSENTIALLY, SYRIANS MADE A DEAL WITH RIGHT WING CHRISTIANS THROUGH FRANGIEHA FEW WEEKS AGO WHICH PERMITTED CEASEFIRE, BAABDA DECLARATION AND PROSPECTS FOR STABILITY FOR IMMEDIATE FUTURE, AT LEAST UNTIL NEW PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN AUGUST. INHERENT IN THIS DEAL WAS CHRISTIAN RIGHTIST UNDERSTANDING THAT SYRIANS WOULD PREVENT SLIPPERY SLOPE OF CONCESSIONS BEYOND MINOR ONES EMBODIED IN BAABDA DECLARATION. IN PARTICULAR, CHRISTIANS EXPECTED SYRIANS TO HANDLE PALESTINIANS AND LEFT WING LEBANESE.

3. FROM CHRISTIAN (FRANGIE) POINT OF VIEW SYRIANS RENEGED ON THIS AGREEMENT WHEN THEY DID NOT CRUSH KHATIB AND PERMITTED JUMBLATT AND REJECTIONIST PALESTINIANS AS WELL AS FATAH TO USE HIM FOR THEIR OWN LARGER REVOLUTIONARY AIMS.

4. WE REALISE OF COURSE THAT SYRIANS MAY THINK FRANGIE RENEGED ON DEAL BECAUSE HE WAS UNABLE TO DELIVER CHRISTIANS TO SYRIAN IDEA OF AN ENLARGED LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WHICH SYRIANS THOUGHT WOULD THEN PERMIT LEBANESE TO CONTROL THEIR OWN AFFAIRS WHILE SYRIANS TRAVELLED TO PARIS. THIS IS AN UNFORTUNATE PERCEPTION OF LEBANESE REALITY. WHILE LEFTIST REPRESENTATION IN A GOVERNMENT WOULD WIN TIME AND MAKE FOR MORE REPRESENTATIVE POLITICAL PROCESS, THERE IS NO MAGIC IN ENLARGED GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL IN ITSELF GUARANTEE REESTABLISHMENT OF SECURITY AS LONG AS LEBANESE LEFT WING REMAINS HUNGRY FOR FURTHER RAPID REFORM AND SEES WAY OF GETTING IT BY MILITARY PRESSURE. CHRISTIANS KEPT INSISTING THAT SECURITY BE REESTABLISHED AND
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ARMY ALLOWED TO CONTROL DESERTERS. FRANGIE REFUSED TOTAL AMNESTY AND SYRIANS INEFFECT BACKED NOT ONLY THOSE WHO WERE RELYING ON AMNESTY FOR BASICALLY BENEVOLENT REASONS (THE CONSERVATIVE MOSLEMS BEHIND PEOPLE SUCH AS KARAME) BUT ALSO THOSE WHO WERE USING AMNESTY ISSUE TO BRING DOWN ENTIRE HOUSE OF CARDS (JUMBLATTISTS AND LEFTISTS). SYRIANS THREW UP THEIR HANDS AND LEFT COUNTRY JUST AT MOMENT WHEN A BIT OF FIRM APPLICATION OF FORCE THROUGH PLA (NEED FOR SYRIAN ARMY)

MIGHT EASILY HAVE KEPT THEM IN CONTROL. RELYING ON WEAK COUP BY BEIRUT GOVERNOR AL AHDAB WAS SIMPLY A RESULT OF EARLIER ERROR AND NOT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN ITSELF.

5. PROOF OF TH PUDDINGLIES IN OBVIOUS HESITATION ON THE PART OF KATAEB AND CHAMOUNISTS WHO WERE PREPARED TO BACK SYRIAN-IMPOSED STABILITY IN FORM OF ALLIANCE BEHIND AHDAB AND HIGHER LEBANESE ARMY COMMAND PROVIDED SYRIANS WOULD REINTEGRATE KHATIB FORCES AND REPLACE FRANGIE WITH SOMEONE WHO COULD REUNITE COUNTRY BUT HAD CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE. WE ARE NOT PRIVY TO NEGOTIATIONS WHICH PROBABLY INVOLVED RAYMOND EDDE AND ELIAS SARKIS AS POSSIBLY SUCCESSORS. WE MUST ASSUME PARLIAMENT WAS UNABLE REACH AGREEMENT ON EITHER OF THESE MEN, SIMPLY BECAUSE LEBANESE LEFT AND LEBANESE RIGHT ARE UNABLE AGREE IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES UNLESS SYRIANS THROW THEIR WEIGHT TOWARD A PARTICULAR CANDIDATE. THIS WAS EXPECTED OF THE SYRIANS BUT DID NOT DEVELOP. I THINK IT THE MAJOR REASON KATAEB AND THE CHAMOUNISTS AGAIN REVERSED COURSES AND CAME DOWN FOR "LEGALITY" (I.E. FRANGIE) ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT HIS DEPARTURE WOULD PUT THEM NO FURTHER AHEAD IN THE GAME BUT MIGHT IN FACT ENCOURAGE GREATER GAINS BY LEFT-WINGERS.

6. RATHER THAN BE FRUSTRATED BY ALL THIS SYRIANS SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT THEY STILL HOLD THE STRONGEST CARDS IN TME GAME. CHRISTIAN RIGHT WING STLL WANTS TO MAKE THE DEAL. WE HEAR KATAEB-CHAMOUNIST DELEGATION MAY BE ON ITS WAY TO DAMSCUS, A KHADDAM RETURN TO LEBENON IS DESIRED. THE MAIN THING IS SYRIANS MUST MAKE UP THEIR MINDS IF THEY DESIRE STABILITY IN LEBANON AT PRESENT OR SOCIAL REVOLUTION CONDUCTED BY LEFT WING. THIS IS A CHOICE THEY APPEAR TO HAVE MADE AT ONE POINT, BUT THEIR PRESENT ATTITUDE IS NOT ALL THAT CLEAR. A RETURN TO PREVIOUS GAME PLAN WOULD OF COURSE REQUIRE A BIT MORE MUSCLE ON JUMBLATT LEFT WING. HOWEVER, EMERGENCE OF MOSLEM
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CONSERVATIVE AL AHDAB PRESENTS NEW RESOURCE TO BE USED. SYRIAN EFFORT SHOULD BE TO WEAN CONSERVATIVE MOSLEMS AWAY FROM LEFT WING POLITICALLY, AT SAME TIME THAT PLA-SAIQA AND OTHER LEVERS ARE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON KATAIB'S ALTERNATIVE ARMY SO THAT IT REINTEGRATES UNDER AL AHDAB.

7. AT LEAST ONE REPORT TODAY THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS INDICATES SAIQA LEADERSHIP ITSELF HAS BEEN SEDUCED BY VISION OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION HERE AND IS URGING MILITARY ATTACK ON FRANGIE AS WELL AS OTHER MILITANT LEFT WING MEASURES. THIS WOULD BE DISASTROUS COURSE FOR SYRIANS TO FOLLOW AT PRESENT, SINCE IT WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO RENEWED OUTBREAK OF CIVIL WAR. WISDOM OF ORIGINAL SYRIAN GAME PLAN WILL HAVE BEEN LOST SIGHT OF. SYRIANS SHOULD REASSURE THEMSELVES THAT THEY WERE RIGHT IN BELIEVING STABILITY FOR A TIME IN LEBANON IS MORE

IMPORTANT THAN FURTHER SOCIAL REFORM NOW.
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